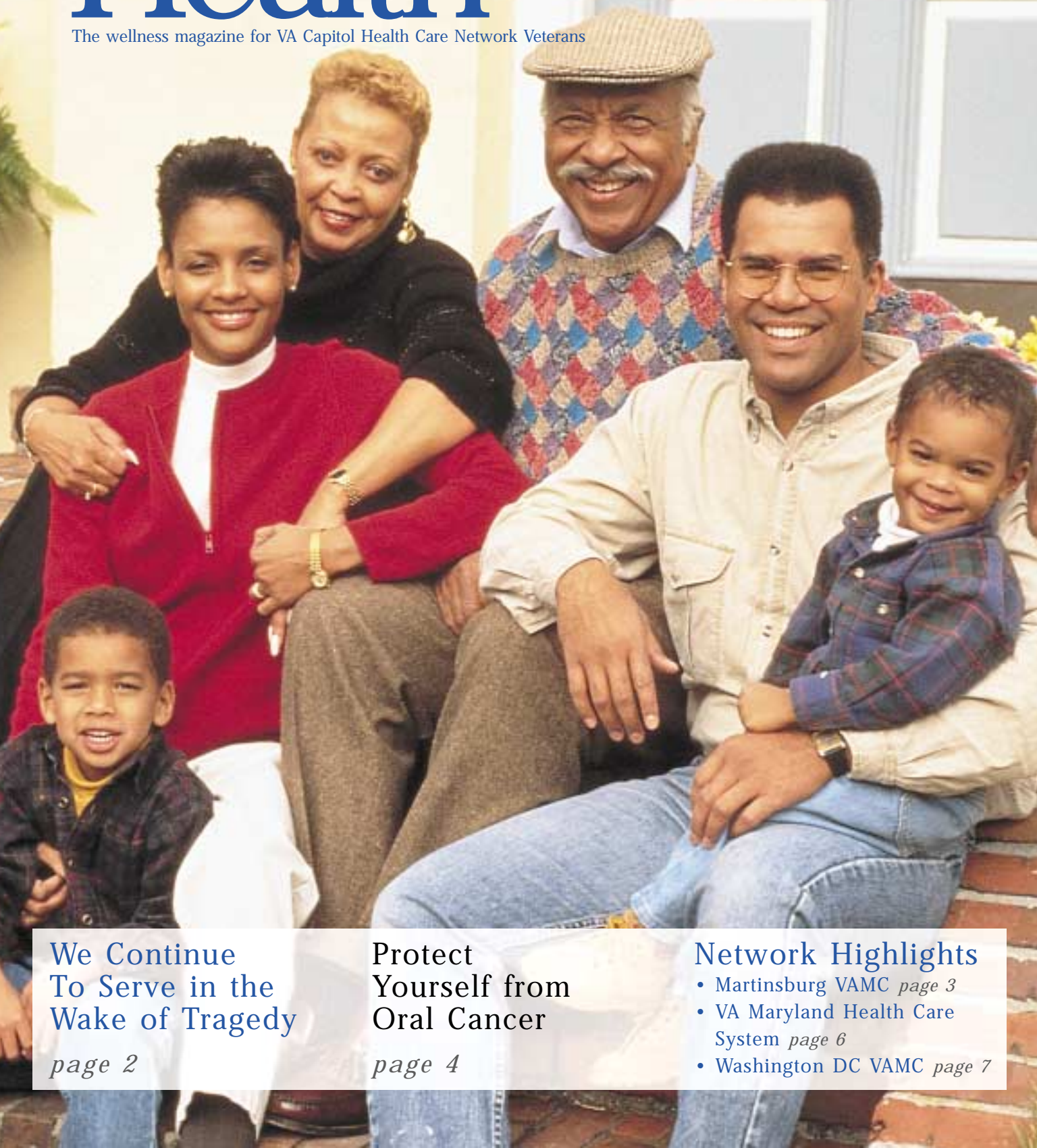


Veterans' Health

The wellness magazine for VA Capitol Health Care Network Veterans

VA Capitol
Health Care
Network
VISN 5
FIVE STAR SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO SERVED



We Continue
To Serve in the
Wake of Tragedy

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Yourself from
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Network Highlights

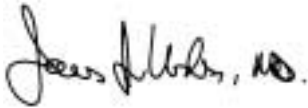
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We Continue To Serve in the Wake of Tragedy

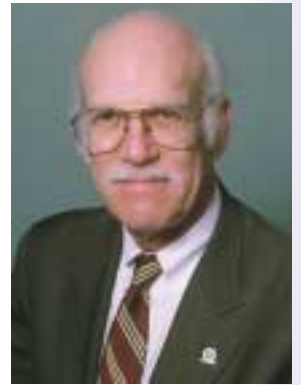
In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks that took place on September 11, 2001, I would like to express, on behalf of all VA employees, our heartfelt sympathy to the families of the many men and women who lost their lives in these terrible tragedies. This event has struck every American deeply. Every member of our VA family shares the pain and the profound sense of loss. For the Americans who answer the call and respond to natural and manmade disasters, who defend our homes, and who fight to maintain the freedoms we enjoy, our thoughts, gratitude, and prayers are with you.

In times like these you can rest assured that we remember the primary mission of the VA: "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan." VA Capitol Health Care Network employees, many of whom are also veterans, will provide the medical and psychological care necessary to help heal the physical and mental injuries that countless numbers of veterans endure.

VA employees will make every effort to meet the needs of the nation's veterans today and tomorrow. We will continue to cultivate a dedicated VA workforce of highly skilled employees who understand, believe in, and take pride in our vitally important mission. To the men and women in uniform—past, present, and future—the Department of Veterans Affairs takes the pledge to always be here for you.



James J. Nocks, M.D., M.S.H.A., Network Director, VA Capitol Health Care Network, VISN 5



James J. Nocks,
M.D., M.S.H.A.

This Holiday Season Give the Gift of Health

Give your veteran friends a healthy holiday gift. Take them to a Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Community Based Outpatient Clinic, or outreach activity for enrollment into VA Health Care. It is a gift that will last a lifetime!



For more information, call the Outreach Coordinator for your hospital:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Baltimore | (410) 605-7000 |
| Fort Howard | (410) 477-1800 |
| Martinsburg | (304) 263-0811 |
| Perry Point | (410) 642-2411 |
| Washington D.C. ... | (202) 745-8000 |



Martinsburg VA Medical Center

HIGHLIGHTS

Telepsychiatry Services at Martinsburg VA

Telepsychiatry (telemedicine) became operational at the Martinsburg VA Medical Center in June 2001. Telepsychiatry provides mental health services to veterans at the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in Hagerstown and Cumberland, Maryland, and Stephens City, Virginia, through the use of "real-time" face-to-face videoconferencing with the Martinsburg VA Medical Center's outpatient Mental Health Clinic staff. This new technology is being used to provide assessments and evaluations as well as to prescribe medications. When a veteran is in need of mental health care, the CBOC staff will make a referral to telepsychiatry. Staff psychiatrists, psychologists, and other outpatient Mental Health Clinic providers will be available to veterans by appointment Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, contact Michelle Cooke, MSW, Martinsburg's Mental Health Clinical Coordinator, at **(304) 263-0811, ext. 4014**.

VA Applications Online

To apply for health care, veterans can fill out and submit an Internet-based 10-10EZ application nationwide. The 10-10EZ is automatically e-mailed to the VA health care facility selected by the veteran. VA employees register the data, print the form, and mail it back to the veteran for signature. Veterans can also print out the

completed form and mail it to a VA health care facility themselves.

"Veterans Online Applications" (VONAPP) is designed for veterans to apply for compensation, pension, and vocational rehabilitation benefits through the Internet. Completed applications are sent electronically to the veteran's local VA office. Processing begins right away, and veterans receive responses letting them know the status of their applications.

Along with 10-10EZ and VONAPP, VA has redesigned its website: **www.va.gov**. The new design makes it easy to find information as well as online applications.

New Co-Payments

A proposed Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regulation that will increase the co-payment some veterans will pay for outpatient prescriptions was published in the *Federal Register* in mid-July. For the past decade, veterans have paid \$2 for each 30-day supply of medication furnished on an outpatient basis for treatment of a non-service-connected condition. This will increase to \$7, with a maximum annual out-of-pocket payment of \$840 for veterans in certain enrollment categories. Veterans and other interested parties may submit comments to: Director, Office of Regulations Management (02D), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20420. Or fax comments to **(202) 273-9289**, or e-mail **OGCRegulations@mail.va.gov**.

Emergency Care

A major improvement in providing emergency care to some uninsured veterans recently took effect. The VA will begin reimbursing non-VA hospitals for emergency services provided to eligible veterans who have no other means of payment. The emergency care benefit does not apply to all veterans. To qualify, veterans must:

- be enrolled in VA health care;
- have been seen by a VA health care professional within 24 months;
- and carry no other form of health insurance, including Medicare or Medicaid.

If any third party pays all or part of the bill, VA cannot provide reimbursement. The emergency care benefit has been in effect since May 29, 2000; however, VA did not have the legal authority to pay private emergency rooms or reimburse veterans for non-VA emergency care until recently. VA will soon begin processing past claims. Under the new rules, civilian hospitals should report to VA within 48 hours of treating a veteran who has no other means of payment. Usually, the treating facility will file for reimbursement. If the non-VA facility bills the veteran directly, the veteran should contact his or her local VA health care facility and a representative will assist in resolving the issue. Questions about the emergency care benefits can be answered at **1-877-222 VETS (8387)**. ★

For VA Benefits information and assistance, dial toll-free **1-800-827-1000**. Public service hours: **8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday**. After-hours service: Leave message for a mailing or return call.

Protect from

Older adults have greatest risk

Mouth and throat cancers are most often diagnosed in older adults. On average, patients develop oral cancer from ages 60 to 63, and more than 95 percent of oral cancers occur in patients older than 45. Men are


diagnosed with the disease twice as often as women; however, the number of women with the disease is increasing.

All forms of tobacco and excessive alcohol use are suspected of causing 75 percent of mouth and throat cancers in the United States. Sun exposure is a risk factor for lip cancer. Smokeless chewing tobacco and snuff increase the risk for cancers inside the lips and cheeks.

Early detection is key

Mouth and throat cancers that are detected and treated early, when they are still localized, have much higher survival rates than those that have spread. Unfortunately, early localized oral cancers are frequently not painful and therefore often go undetected until the cancer has spread. In fact, about half of these cancers have spread to lymph nodes in the neck by the time they're found and treated.

Detecting and treating oral cancer at its early, curable stage is crucial. The high death rate and unfavorable effects associated with these cancers are often the

 **REGULAR DENTIST VISITS CAN
HELP DETECT ORAL CANCER AT AN
EARLY, CURABLE STAGE.**



Dental and oral care is part of a healthy lifestyle.

Daily brushing, flossing, eating a balanced diet, and limiting sweets reduce the risk of tooth decay and gum disease. Periodic dental visits provide an opportunity for early detection and treatment of dental diseases whether you have natural or artificial teeth.

Most people are aware of the risks of tooth decay and gum disease. However, mouth and throat cancers are especially dangerous diseases. The American Cancer Society estimates that this year alone, about 30,000 mouth and throat cancers will be diagnosed and 7,800 people will die from them.

Despite advances in medical technology, only half of those diagnosed with oral cancer are still alive five years after the diagnosis. And for many who do survive, the effects of the disease and its treatment can be devastating.



New VSN 5 Dental Care Sites

Dental Service

Washington DC VA Medical Center

Richard Sniffen, DDS, Chief
(202) 745-8272
(888) 553-0242, ext. 8272

Dental Service

Martinsburg VA Medical Center

Joseph Hancock, DDS, Chief
(304) 263-0811, ext. 3316
(800) 817-3807, ext. 3316

Dental Care Clinical Center

Perry Point VA Medical Center

Philip Levinson, DDS, Director
(410) 642-2411, ext. 5063, 5064
(800) 949-1003, ext. 5063, 5064

Dental Care Clinical Center

Baltimore VA Medical Center

John Iddings, DDS
Dentist/Manager
(410) 605-7056
(800) 463-6295, ext. 7056

Dental Care Clinical Center

Fort Howard VA Medical Center

Edward Cunningham, DDS
Dentist/Supervisor
(410) 477-7007
(800) 351-8387, ext. 7007

Philip Levinson, DDS, Director, Dental Care
VA Maryland Health Care System

Watch for these signs

- a mouth sore that does not heal;
- a lump, thickening, or mass in the mouth or neck;
- a red or white patch in the mouth;
- a sore throat or feeling that something is caught in the throat;
- voice change;
- difficulty chewing or swallowing;
- difficulty moving the jaw or tongue;
- numbness or swelling in the mouth or throat;
- loosening of the teeth;
- and weight loss.

To reduce your risk for mouth and throat cancer, stop using tobacco products, limit your alcohol consumption, and see your dentist. Regular dental examinations increase the opportunity for early detection of oral cancer. ★

| Class Criteria | Treatment Coverage |
|--|---|
| I. Service-connected, compensable dental conditions/disabilities | Comprehensive, continuing dental care |
| II. Service-connected, non-compensable dental conditions | One episode of comprehensive dental care if conditions existed at discharge; active military service was greater than 180 days, and veteran applied to VA within 90 days after separation; veterans who served on active duty for 90 days or more during the Persian Gulf Action are included |
| IIa. Service-connected, non-compensable dental conditions resulting from combat wounds or service injuries | Care for conditions resulting from wounds or injuries |
| IIb. Service-connected, non-compensable dental condition in ex-POWs, fewer than 90 days | Repeat dental care for the service-connected condition |
| IIc. Ex-POWs, 90 days or more | Any needed dental treatment |
| III. Dental conditions that are currently aggravating a service-connected medical condition | Dental treatment to resolve problem |
| IV. Veterans who are 100% service connected | Any needed dental treatment |
| V. Veterans in vocational rehabilitation programs | Dental care to the extent necessary to assist them to complete their programs |
| VI. Special provisions: Veterans who are receiving medical services and who have non-service-connected status may be provided limited outpatient dental care if the dental condition is complicating a medical condition currently under treatment by VA | Dental treatment to resolve problem |



VA Maryland Health Care System H I G H L I G H T S

Fort Howard Clinic Provides Valuable Outpatient Primary Care Services

By Leslie Lichtenberg



Veterans receiving primary care at the Fort Howard VA Medical Center will continue to have access to all services provided, including physical examinations and preventive health care such as immunizations and screening tests, during and after the Fort Howard Mission Change.

There is good news to report. Veteran patients at the Fort Howard VA Medical Center are being reminded that primary care services at the outpatient clinic are available and will remain available, despite changes taking place in other areas of the medical center. In fact, a future building renovation being planned at Fort Howard will facilitate the continuation of primary care services in new and updated space. The community-based outpatient clinic will continue to offer patients a complete menu of primary care and outpatient mental health services. Primary care providers will refer patients requiring specialty services and additional levels of care to other VA Maryland Health Care System facilities.

Excitement at the Fort Howard VA Medical Center is building, as

changes outside the outpatient clinic are transforming the medical center to better serve patients in the future. In keeping with the center's recently adopted mission change, the Fort Howard facility promises to support patient programs in an improved, more accessible environment to meet the diverse and changing health care needs of all veterans. Within this atmosphere of change, veterans are assured that the outpatient clinic at Fort Howard will remain operational and will continue to provide quality health care services to the community at large.

For more information on the services provided at the Fort Howard Medical Center Outpatient Clinic or to schedule an appointment, please call **(410) 477-1800, ext. 2508 or 2077.** ★

Geriatrics/Long-Term Care Nursing Unit Gets New Look

The Perry Point Medical Center has a long-standing tradition of providing quality extended care to our nation's veterans. Now with the renovation of the third-floor ward in building 23H, Perry Point continues this ongoing commitment. The B-wing was completely remodeled into a new 27-bed nursing unit that has a home-like decor accented with furnishings, draperies, and wall borders.

One of the many enhancements includes private and semiprivate patient bedrooms with their own private bathrooms and phones. The unit is also equipped



The warmly decorated private and semiprivate rooms allow patients to have all the comforts of home, including a self-controlled thermostat and a telephone.

with a new ventilation system, and patients can even individualize the comfort of their room's environment with their own thermostat.

Patients on the unit are also able to enjoy a dayroom where they can experience the delights of a big screen television, camaraderie with fellow veterans, games for recreation, or simple relaxation in the recliner chairs.

Some of the other improvements to the remodeled ward include a new spacious nurses' station with a nurse call system and a large shower equipped with a state-of-the-art patient tub. ★



Washington DC VA Medical Center HIGHLIGHTS

Just a Page Away ... New Initiatives Bring Patients and Their Families Closer Together

What do pagers and phone cards have in common? They are just two of the Washington DC VA Medical Center's initiatives to improve services to veterans.

■ 'Patient Pager' program

A "Patient Pager" program has been implemented throughout the medical and surgical units at the Washington DC VA Medical Center. The pagers are offered to family members of patients on many units including Same Day Surgery. The pagers allow families to move freely around the facility or take the pager home with them. Families are comforted by knowing if anything happens to their loved ones, they are just a page away.



■ Free phone cards

The medical center, in conjunction with the DAV, gives free phone cards to inpatients so they can stay in touch with their families and friends. Patients from Washington especially appreciate the cards, according to Bill Sivley, lead patient advocate.

■ Brightening your day

We all have bad days from time to time. When a patient at the medical center has one of those days, we want to show him or her we are sorry. Those veterans can get coupons for free drinks and meals from the clinic clerks. It is the medical center's way of saying, "We apologize and we care." ★



United in Prayer

Washington DC VA Medical Center employees and veterans attend a special prayer service for the victims of the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center on September 11. Shortly after the attack on the nearby Pentagon, the medical center was placed on alert to receive casualties. As emergency preparations progressed, the staff continued to care for our veterans in the clinics and on the wards.

Valet Parking and New Lot Are Added Convenience for Veterans

The Washington DC VA Medical Center has made it easier to come to the hospital. It started a valet parking program and constructed a new parking lot.

The medical center is now providing free valet parking for patients from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays. Veterans simply drive their cars to the atrium entrance, where a uniformed valet will take and park their cars for them. This service, which started on May 1, 2001, is popular with the veterans. It is convenient and timesaving.

Construction to provide more than 300 new parking places at the medical center was completed in October. A bypass roadway to parking lots on the other side of the hospital was constructed in phase I of this project. It has reduced traffic congestion at the front entrance. ★



Free valet parking is a popular program at the Washington DC VA Medical Center.



VA Capitol Health Care Network Veterans Integrated Service Network 5 (VISN 5)

Important Telephone Numbers

VA Maryland Health Care System

Baltimore VAMC
1-800-463-6295

Fort Howard VAMC
1-800-351-8387

Perry Point VAMC
1-800-949-1003

VAMHCS Medical Advice Line
1-800-865-2441

Automated Prescription Refill and Clinic Appointment System
1-800-463-6295, ext. 7395

Mobile Clinic Number
1-800-351-8387, ext. 2281

Martinsburg VA Medical Center

Martinsburg VAMC
(304) 263-0811

Medical Advice Line
1-800-817-3807 or (304) 262-4855

Patient Eligibility
(304) 263-0811, ext. 3758/3757
Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
or ext. 3050 after 4:30 p.m.

Automated Prescription Refill System
(304) 263-0811, ext. 4870 (all hours)

Mobile Clinic Number
1-800-817-3807

Washington DC VA Medical Center

General Information
(202) 745-8000

Medical Advice Line
(202) 745-8247

VETS Information
(202) 745-4046

Mobile Clinic Number
(202) 745-8247

PTSD Clinic Number
(202) 745-8591

Outpatient Clinics

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Cambridge, MD (410) 228-6243 | Glen Burnie, MD (410) 590-4140 | Loch Raven, MD (410) 605-7650 | Harrisonburg, VA (540) 442-1773 | Petersburg, WV (304) 257-1026, ext. 120 |
| Charlotte Hall, MD (301) 884-7102 | Greenbelt, MD (301) 345-2463 | Pocomoke City, MD (410) 957-6718 | Stephens City, VA (540) 869-0600 | Washington, DC (202) 745-8685 |
| Cumberland, MD (301) 724-0061 | Hagerstown, MD (301) 665-1462 | Alexandria, VA (703) 719-6797 | Franklin, WV (304) 358-2355 | |

Vet Centers

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Baltimore, MD (410) 277-3600 | Silver Spring, MD (301) 589-1073 | Martinsburg, WV (304) 263-6776 |
| Belair, MD (410) 569-0050 | Washington, DC (202) 543-8821 | Alexandria, VA (703) 360-8633 |
| Cambridge, MD (410) 228-6305, ext. 4123 | | |

Veterans Benefit Administration

1-800-827-1000

Education Information Hotline

1-800-442-4551

Visit us on our website at www.va.gov/visn5

Veterans' Health

Department of Veterans Affairs
849 International Drive
Suite 275
Linthicum, MD 21090

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